

# The moderating effect of salespersons' selling behaviour on shopping motivation and satisfaction: Taiwan tourists in China

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## Abstract

According to an official tourism report from China, Taiwan tourists' shopping expenditures were ranked number one in China. Taiwanese tourists place foremost emphasis on the quality of products and services they received from salespeople. However, research on Taiwanese shopping behaviour was still scant. The main research objective was to investigate the moderating effect of selling behaviour on shopping motivation and satisfaction in China.

The results indicated that SOSB (service-oriented selling behaviour) had positive moderating effects on *variety of products*, *quality of products*, and *shopping habits*. PSOSB (product selling-oriented selling behaviour), on the contrary, elicited negative moderating effects on *quality of products*, *uniqueness/good value* and *non-availability* in Taiwan. Also, a salesperson's selling behaviour had a negative moderating effect on shopping motivation and satisfaction in terms of *attractive prices*. With reference to the *fashion or novelty*, no moderating effect was found on shopping motivation and satisfaction with either SOSB or PSOSB. Generalized Negativity Theory and Assimilation-Contrast Theory were used to explain the results.

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## 1. Introduction

Shopping is an important element in tourism (Timothy & Butler, 1995). Shopping attracts nearly 50% of the expenditures of Taiwanese tourists (Mak, Tsang, & Cheung, 1999). It is common for tourists, in particular Asian shoppers, to purchase crafts or souvenirs with reference to cultural norms of gift-giving and, as in other parts of the world, to collect authentic mementos (Littrell, Anderson, & Brown, 1993; Wang & Ryan, 1998). Shopping is the most popular tourist activity in many destinations (Kent, Shock, & Snow, 1983) and big retail stores and shopping outlet complexes have become indispensable facilities in modern tourism destinations

(Turner & Reisinger, 2001). Shopping opportunities are important elements in destination marketing (Jansen-Verbeke, 1988).

Keown (1989) and Heung and Qu (1998) indicated that a trip is not complete without spending time shopping. For tourists, shopping is not only a must-do activity (Cohen, 1995) but also a destination attraction (Ryan, 1991; Timothy & Butler, 1995). Shopping is an attraction which complements other attractions in a package tour (Mak et al., 1999).

Jansen-Verbeke (1988) defined tourism shopping as the purchase behaviours of tourists at their destination. Excluding food and drink items, the types of tourist purchasing include clothing, shoes, jewellery, leather, perfumes/makeup and watches, as well as arts and crafts and foodstuffs deemed to be typical of the area. Kent et al. (1983) found that the expenditures on shopping are larger than on accommodation and food. Furthermore,

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from the perspective of destination economic gains, shopping contributes significantly and affords job opportunities for local merchants as well as for those that make the products that they sell.

For some developing countries, tourism promotion and development are paramount economic growth strategies. China is typical in this respect (Vellas & Becherel, 1995). According to the China Travel Bureau's statistical figures (2002), the inbound tourists reached 97,910 million in 2001. Their average daily expenditure was US\$140.09. Among them, foreign tourists (exclusive of compatriots, i.e. people from Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan) spent US\$147.72 per person per day, followed by Hong Kong Chinese (US\$111.19 per person per day) and those from Macau (US\$102.09 per person per day). Taiwan tourists spent the most compared to other international tourists (US\$ 151.50 per person per day). Similarly, Taiwan tourists spent the most (US\$67.24) on day visits to China. Thus, the expenditures of Taiwan tourists are worthy of great attention for they are significant spenders (Mok & Lam, 1997; Lang, O'Leary, & Morrison, 1997; Mok & Iverson, 2000; Master & Prideaux, 2000).

Although some research has been conducted on Taiwanese shopping behaviour in Hong Kong (Mok & Lam, 1997; Mak et al., 1999; Wong & Law, 2003; Lehto, Cai, O'Leary, & Huan, 2004), Australia (Master & Prideaux, 2000) and Guam (Mok & Iverson, 2000), the magnitude of Taiwanese shopping behaviour is still not well-recognized. Because of Taiwan's colonial past (ruled by Dutch and the Japanese) and with the American military influence from 1954 to 1979, Taiwanese tourists are compelled to look for symbolic meanings in both western (e.g. American and European) and eastern cultures (e.g. Japanese and Chinese) and, therefore, their spending patterns are difficult to predict (Mok, Armstrong, & Go, 1995). For example, they do not place initial emphasis on price when shopping. Rather, they stress the quality of the merchandise and the services received from salespeople (Van Roo, 1989).

Taiwan is the largest international tourist-generating market to China (Wang & Ap, 2003). Nevertheless, the researchers are not aware of previous research exploring Taiwanese shopping behaviour in China. Obviously, China and Taiwan share similar cultural roots and no major obstacles in communication exist between the two peoples. Therefore, more and more Taiwanese travel to China for a variety of purposes (Yu, 1992). However, it is claimed that Taiwanese complain that they get charged more than locals and other nationalities. In fact, some Taiwanese tourists have informally been called "*Dai-bou*" ("stupid compatriots") by some salespeople in China (Chang, 2001). Nevertheless, Taiwanese are still interested in engaging in shopping in China during their travels. However, according to Zhang and Lew (2003), China is a latecomer on the world tourism

stage. The training of salespeople who cater to tourists is insufficient. Yet, salespeople's selling behaviours influence consumers' satisfaction, often substantially (Westbrook, 1981; Westbrook & Black, 1985; Goff, Boles, Bellenger, & Stojack, 1997; Heung & Cheng, 2000). Naturally, as pointed out by Spiro and Weitz (1990), China inbound tourists' shopping satisfaction should be influenced by the local salesperson's selling behaviour in delivering services to meet tourists' shopping motives. As such, what kind of moderating effects do these salespeople have on the shopping motives and satisfaction of Taiwan tourists?

Thus, the major research objective is to investigate the moderating factor (salesperson's selling behaviour) and its effects on Taiwanese tourists' shopping motivation and satisfaction when travelling in China.

## 2. Literature review

The majority of shopping studies have stemmed from the retailing field. Thus, before presenting various arguments on tourism shopping, a review on retailing literature is required.

### 2.1. Shopping motivation and satisfaction

Shopping is a source of relaxation. From the viewpoint of gender stereotype, some believe that shopping is a female-dominated activity (South & Spitze, 1994). Dholakia (1999), however, noted that nowadays it is quite common to see male shoppers in supermarkets. As a sign of transformation on the shopping role, male consumers can satisfy both intrinsic (e.g. enjoying) and extrinsic motives (e.g. appreciation by family members) while undertaking grocery shopping in the supermarket. However, some research indicates the fact that female shoppers, such as Taiwanese female tourists, tend to purchase more frequently and spend more than their male counterparts. Thus, gender differences relating to shopping behaviours are confirmed by relevant studies (Lehto et al., 2004).

With respect to shopping motives, Buttle (1992) believes that shopping motives vary according to various contexts. For instance, the motive in grocery shopping is different from gift shopping. Consequently, shopping satisfaction tends to be different. Sheth (1983) and Eastlick and Feinberg (1999) proposed that shopping motives comprise functional and non-functional motives. Functional motives refer to tangible attributes such as convenience, variety and quality of merchandise, and physical facility. Non-functional motives, on the other hand, include social needs for interaction with other people and non-tangible retailer attributes such as company reputation and customers' perceptions.

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